DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 589 PS 012 191

AUTHOR Thompson, Earl T.; And Others
TITLE Effects of Parity and Time on Maternal Attitudes in the Neonatal Period.
SPONS AGENCY Public Health Service (DHEW), Rockville, Md.
PUB DATE Apr 81
GRANT NU-00677
NOTE 11p.; An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Boston, MA, April 2-5, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Change; *Child Rearing; *Mother Attitudes; Mothers; *Neonates; *Parent Child Relationship; Self Esteem; *Time Perspective
IDENTIFIERS Maternal Self Concept; *Parity

ABSTRACT

The effects of parity (the number of children a mother bears) and time on the formation of maternal attitudes in the neonatal period are investigated in this study. Subjects were medically normal women, 47 multiparae and 37 primiparae, who delivered healthy, full-term infants. Each woman completed a battery of eight attitude questionnaires at 1-2 days following delivery and again at 4-6 weeks postpartum, as a measure of attitudes toward self as mother, toward the infant, and toward childrearing. Results demonstrated that both parity groups increased in self-confidence across time, with the primiparae sample showing the greater gain; however, multiparae rated themselves more confident than primiparae at both time points. In addition, results indicated that mothers perceived their infants less positively over time. Finally, both parity groups showed less adaptive childrearing attitudes at 4-6 weeks than at 1-2 days postpartum. Results are discussed in terms of a deromanticization of the infant that occurs over time. It is hypothesized that once the elation of the childbirth experience has been tempered with the realities of child care and the emergence of individualized infant characteristics, mothers begin to see their infants in a more realistic way. (Author/MP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED202589

Effects of Parity and Time on Maternal Attitudes in the Neonatal Period

Earl T. Thompson

Lorraine O. Walker

Helen C. Crain

The University of Texas at Austin

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Boston, April 1981. This study was supported by research grant NU00677 from the Division of Nursing, U.S. Public Health Service, to the second author. Requests for reprints of this paper and copies of the attitude scales should be sent to Lorraine Walker, School of Nursing, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78701.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Earl T. Thompson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS012191

Runring head: Effects of Parity

Abstract

The present study investigated the effects of parity and time on the formation of maternal attitudes in the neonatal period. 47 multiparae and 37 primiparae completed a battery of eight attitude questionnaires at 1-2 days following delivery and again at 4-6 weeks postpartum. Subjects were medically normal and delivered healthy, full-term infants. Maternal attitudes are interpreted to include those toward self as mother, the infant, and childrearing. Results demonstrated that both parity groups increased in self-confidence across time, with the primiparae sample showing the greater gain; however, multiparae rated themselves more confident than primiparae at either time point. In addition, results indicated that mothers perceive their infants less positively over time. Finally, both parity groups showed less adaptive childrearing attitudes at 4-6 weeks than at 1-2 days postpartum. Results are discussed in terms of a deromanticization of the infant that occurs over time. It is hypothesized that once the elation of the childbirth experience has been tempered with the realities of child care and the emergence of individualized infant characteristics, mothers begin to see their infants in a more realistic way.

Effects of Parity and Time on Maternal Attitudes in the Neonatal Period

The study of early parental attitudes is important for a thorough understanding of early infant development (Freese and Thoman, 1978; Parke, Hymel, Power & Tinsley, 1980; Lessen-Firestone & Jones, Note 1). Whereas parental behaviors directly shape the social environment of infants, parental attitudes more subtly define it. There is little doubt, however, that the measurement of parental attitudes in the neonatal period is a complex task. First, the relevant attitudinal dimensions for study are unclear. This is due in part to the absence of well developed theoretical models of the intrapsychic aspects of becoming a parent. Second, a battery of attitudinal tools known to be psychometrically acceptable is not currently available. Except for the work of Freese and Thoman (1978), little psychometric analysis of available scales relevant to the early weeks of parenting has been done. Third, empirically based studies which document the course of the early parent-infant relationship have been limited in scope in three ways: (a) by studying attitudes at only one time point (e.g. Tulkin and Cohler, 1973), (b) by focusing on generalized or global attitudes rather than material specific to early parenting and infancy (e.g. Goldstein, Taub, Caputo & Silberstein, 1976), and (c) by examining parity differences almost exclusively from a behavioral rather than an attitudinal standpoint (e.g. Kilbride, Johnson & Streissguth, 1977).

In this study a three dimensional framework was adopted to study the effects of parity and time on maternal attitudes. The dimensions included: 1) attitudes of the mother toward herself, 2) attitudes toward the infant, and 3) attitudes toward childrearing.

Subjects were 47 married, middle class multiparae and 37 married, middle class primiparae delivering at a community hospital in the Southwest. Mothers had vaginal deliveries without major medical complications. Infants were healthy singletons and full term at birth. Infants in both parity groups had 5-min Apgar $\geq$ 8. Multiparae and primiparae did not differ significantly in maternal education or SES. Mean age for multiparae was 29.6 years and 25.3 for primiparae. This difference was statistically significant, $F(1/82)=29.93$, $p<.001$. 28 female and 19 male infants were represented in the multiparous sample and 13 females and 24 males in the primiparous sample.

Mothers completed a battery of attitude scales at 1-2 days following delivery and again at 4-6 weeks postpartum. Attitudes toward self as mother were measured by two extant scales: 1) the Seashore self-confidence scale (Seashore, Leifer, Barnett, & Leiderman, 1973) and 2) the Pharis scale of self-confidence in baby care (Pharis, Note 2). In addition, two new scales were developed to measure affective components of mothering: 1) the Maternal Enjoyment Scale of Caregiving and 2) a semantic differential scale containing evaluative adjective pairs pertinent to the concept, MYSELF AS MOTHER. Attitudes toward the infant were measured by 1) the Broussard Neonatal Perception Inventories, YOUR BABY Subscale (Broussard and Hartner, 1971) and 2) a semantic differential scale pertaining to the concept, MY BABY. Finally, child-rearing attitudes were measured with 1) infant items from the Cohler Maternal Attitude Scale (Cohler, Weiss & Grunebaum, Note 3) and 2) the Traditional Family Ideology Scale, Parent-Child Relationships Subscale (Levinson and Huffman, 1955). The former is a Likert type scale that measures adaptiveness of childrearing attitudes, whereas the latter measures authoritarianism in

parent-child relationships. All attitude scales were found to meet the minimum standards (.50-.60) for internal consistency reliability in both samples (Nunnally, 1967).

2 x 2 analysis of variance was used in the data analysis to assess the effects of time and parity on maternal attitude levels. Both the Seashore and Pharis self confidence scales showed significant main effects for time, $F(1/76)=50.86$, $p<.001$, and $F(1/81)=27.40$, $p<.001$ respectively. On both of these scales significant main effects for parity also were found, $F(1/76)=8.96$, $p<.01$, and $F(1/81)=28.25$, $p<.001$ respectively. Parity by time interactions also reached significance on both scales, $F(1/76)=13.39$, $p<.001$ and $F(1/81)=21.43$, $p<.001$ respectively. Both parity groups increased in self-confidence over time. Whereas multiparae reported greater amounts of self-confidence at both time points than primiparae, primiparae showed a greater gain in self-confidence across time.

Insert Table 1 about here

The Maternal Enjoyment Scale and maternal semantic differential scale showed no significant effects for time or parity, although there was a non-significant trend for both parity groups to see themselves more positively over time.

Attitudes toward the infant as measured by the Broussard Neonatal Perception Inventories YOUR BABY Subscale showed no significant trends for either parity or time. On the other hand, a significant main effect was noted for time, $F(1/78)=17.46$, $p<.001$, on the infant semantic differential scale for the concept MY BABY. Both primipirae and multiparae saw their babies less positively over the course of the neonatal period.

With respect to childrearing attitudes, no significant effects were noted for time or parity on the authoritarianism scale; however, a significant main effect for time, $F(1/77)=11.20$, $p<.01$, was found on the infant items from the Cohler scale. Both parity groups showed less adaptive attitudes on this scale at 4-6 weeks postpartum than was the case shortly following delivery.

Due to unequal proportions of male and female infants in the two parity groups, infant sex was correlated with each attitude at birth and follow-up separately for parity groups. In general, few sex effects were found, although infant sex was correlated with one attitude on which there was parity or time effects. This occurred among primiparae on the Pharis self-confidence scale at 4-6 weeks postpartum, $r = .27$, $p<.05$. That is, mothers of boys reported greater self-confidence than those of girls at 4-6 weeks after delivery. Thus, the findings reported here suggest that, generally, parity and time effects are independent of the sex of the infant.

In reflecting on attitudes of mothers toward themselves, there can be little argument that practice in a particular role leads to better role performance. This appears to be the case in explaining why both parity groups increased in self confidence over time, and further, that multiparae were initially, and subsequently more confident than primiparae on both self-confidence scales. That multiparae showed less gain in self confidence can be explained by the fact that their experiential level was relatively high to begin with due to previous child care experience.

The shifts from more positive to less positive attitudes toward the infant and toward infant childrearing are not as easily explained in relation to the available data; however, it is hypothesized that a deromaniticizing phenomenon might occur during the neonatal period.

That is, as the elation of the childbirth experience wears off, mothers begin to see their babies in more realistic ways. Further, as the constraints of providing actual child care combine with emerging individual characteristics of the newborn, mothers may begin to perceive infants more realistically. This hypothesis was in fact supported by a post hoc examination of the content of individual items on the Cohler scale. A shift to less positive attitudes occurred primarily on items dealing with the pleasures and joys of caring for an infant. This finding is in line with the concept of a "baby honeymoon" (Jacoby, 1968) which may subsequently wane.

In summary, two attitudinal processes among new mothers have been identified in this study: 1) an increase in maternal self confidence during the neonatal period, and 2) a complementary decline in romanticizing the newborn infant. We believe that these findings suggest that as mothers become more confident, they are then able to see their infants as less than perfect.

Left unanswered by this research are several important questions. 1) Given this knowledge of modal attitudes with respect to self, infant and childrearing, can optimal values for maternal attitudes during the course of the neonatal period be identified? 2) Still further, what impact does the social environment, e.g. social support, have on these attitudinal processes? 3) Finally, how, if at all, do the maternal attitude changes identified in this study relate to the caregiving and social interactions between mothers and infants? These questions are being addressed in the larger research program of which this study is a part.

Reference Notes

1. Lessen-Firestone, J. K., & Jones, D. C. Maternal attitudes and mother-infant interaction: Patterns of reciprocal influence. Paper presented at biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, 1977.

2. Pharis, M. E. Age and sex differences in expectations for infants and the parenting role among couples in a first pregnancy and among university students. Unpublished dissertation. The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, 1978.

3. Cohler, B. J., Weiss, J. L., & Grunebaum, H. U. The maternal attitude scale: A questionnaire for studying childrearing attitudes in mothers of giving children. Available from Microfiche Publications, 305 East 46th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017.

References

Broussard, E. R., & Hartnev, M. S. S. Further considerations regarding maternal perception of the newborn. In J. Hellmieth (Ed.) Exceptional infant. Vol. 2, Studies in abnormalities. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1971.

Freese, M. P., & Thoman, E. B. The assessment of maternal characteristics for the study of mother-infant interaction. Infant behavior and development, 1978, 1, 95-105.

Goldstein, K. M., Laub, H. B., Caputo, D. V., & Silberstein, R. M. Child status and demographic variables as related to maternal childrearing attitudes. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 1976, 42, 87-97.

Jacoby, A. P. Transition to parenthood: A reassessment. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1969, 31, 720-727.

Kilbride, H. W., Johnson, D. L., & Streissguth, A. P. Social class, birth order, & newborn experience. Child Development, 1977, 48, 1686-1688.

Levinson, D. & Huffman, P. The traditional family ideology and its relation to personality. Journal of Personality, 1955, 23, 251-273.

Nunnally, J. Psychometric theory. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.

Parke, R. D., Hymel, S., Power, T. G., & Tinsley, B. R. Fathers and risk: a hospital based model of intervention. In D. Sawin, R. Hawkins, L. O. Walker, & J. H. Penticuff (Eds.) Exceptional infant IV. Psychosocial risks and infant environment transactions. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1980.

Seashore, M. J., Leifer, A. D., Barnett, C. R., & Leiderman, P. H. The effects of denial of early mother-infant interaction on maternal self confidence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1973, 26, 369-378.

Tulkin, S. R., & Cohler, B. J. Childrearing attitudes and mother-infant interaction in the first year of life. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 1973, 19, 95-106.

Table 1

Means for Maternal Attitudes by Parity Groups and Time Points Following Birth

Attitude	Primiparae		Multiparae	
	1-2 days	4-6 weeks	1-2 days	4-6 weeks
Attitudes Toward Self as Mother				
Seashore self confidence[a, b, c]	25.7 (3.7)	28.8 (1.7)	28.2 (2.4)	29.9 (1.9)
Phenix self confidence[a, b, c]	51.0 (8.8)	57.6 (4.3)	59.7 (4.4)	60.1 (4.3)
Semantic Differential	63.1 (8.5)	64.6 (6.5)	65.7 (6.8)	66.5 (7.0)
Enjoyment of Care giving	28.6 (2.4)	28.7 (2.0)	28.8 (2.0)	28.9 (1.6)
Attitudes Toward Infant				
Neonatal Perception Inventory Your Baby Subscale	14.8 (2.4)	14.6 (3.1)	14.2 (2.4)	13.5 (3.9)
Semantic Differential[b]	38.7 (3.3)	36.5 (3.8)	39.5 (3.0)	37.9 (3.9)
Attitudes Toward Childrearing				
Traditional Family Ideology Subscale	51.2 (12.3)	52.3 (10.4)	48.7 (10.2)	48.8 (10.9)
Abbreviated Cohler[b]	125.0 (12.8)	121.5 (11.2)	125.8 (14.5)	118.3 (17.4)

Note. Numbers in parenthesis indicate standard deviations.

[a]significant main effect for parity

[b]significant main effect for time

[c]significant parity x time interaction effect